

For almost a decade, the Pew Center on the States, Governing Magazine and a group of academic experts have collaborated on this project to assess the quality of management in state government.

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Iowa

B

Amid growing concerns among Americans about job stability, health care and education, there is a new demand for government to work better and cost less. Innovative solutions, particularly at the state level, are driving reform and progress. Iowa has been one of the leaders in this management reform trend, with cutting-edge innovations such as the state's six "charter agencies," which offer performance improvements and cost savings in exchange for reduced red tape.

Executive Summary

Iowa's political culture has embraced strengthening government management. The new governor has largely adhered to the broad framework set down by his predecessor and has continued to refine the state's generally strong practices. One weakness likely to linger is the amount of deferred highway maintenance, a problem that was allowed to develop over many years.

Iowa uses a variety of performance measures and makes the results available on the state's Web site. Executive branch and legislative officials are comfortable using these benchmarks to assess program effectiveness. Moreover, the state recently improved its ability to evaluate programs by producing higher quality performance audits.

Strategic planning has been a mainstay as well, both in the agencies and the governor's office. However, the state's overall strategic plans have not outlined detailed strategies to achieve goals, and some agencies (such as the Department of Corrections) have outdated strategic plans and lack performance measures. Iowa is revamping both its overall and agency strategic plans.

Iowa has a highly developed capital planning process, and it recently completed a statewide overview of all transportation

PEOPLE

B+

- Strategic Workforce Planning
- Hiring
- Retaining Employees
- Training and Development
- Managing Employee Performance

INFORMATION

B+

- Strategic Direction
- Budgeting for Performance
- Managing for Performance
- Program Evaluation
- Online Services and Information

MONEY

B+

- Long-Term Outlook
- Budget Process
- Structural Balance
- Contracting/Purchasing
- Financial Controls/Reporting

INFRASTRUCTURE

C+

- Capital Planning
- Project Monitoring
- Maintenance
- Internal Coordination
- Intergovernmental Coordination

○ weakness ● mid-level ● strength

needs, including roads and bridges. A recent shift in priorities from building new roads to addressing long-deferred maintenance probably will not significantly reduce the \$1.6 billion backlog of needed repairs because of flattening gas tax revenues and rising construction costs. But the collaborative overview among executive agencies, legislators, and many counties and municipalities detailed numerous maintenance priorities and the scale of the state's needs.

Iowa's financial practices generally are sound, and the state retains conservative debt policies and a replenished rainy-day fund. It also has boosted contributions to its pension funds.

Iowa has upgraded workforce planning in the past few years and has identified its current and future human capital needs. Turnover rates remain low, a reflection of the wide range of benefits and good salaries, but nearly half of all employees have reached the highest salary grade, somewhat curtailing the state's managerial flexibility.

THE PEW CENTER ON THE STATES' Government Performance Project

The Pew Charitable Trusts applies the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew's Center on the States identifies and advances effective policy approaches to critical issues facing states.

The mission of the **Government Performance Project**, an initiative of the Pew Center on the States, is to improve service to the public by strengthening government policy and performance. The Project evaluates how well states manage employees, budgets and finance, information and infrastructure. A focus on these critical areas helps ensure that states' policy decisions and practices actually deliver their intended outcomes.

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